



## Before 1939. Refugee Architects in New Zealand

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## Before 1939: refugee architects to New Zealand

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### ABSTRACT

In 1939, a number of European architects found refuge in New Zealand from the National Socialist regime. Their subsequent practice led to the notion that their presence had a significant impact on New Zealand architectural culture – especially in transmitting ideas associated with modernist architecture. This paper investigates the European work of this heterogeneous group of architects, all of whom came as refugees to New Zealand. In outlining the biographies of these architects prior to their arrival in New Zealand, insights are gained into their diverse experiences, cultural backgrounds and multi-faceted set of skills. This adds to recent scholarship that discusses the ways in which architectural ideas associated with modernism entered New Zealand and analyses the topic from multiple viewpoints in which the transmission of ideas is understood as a multilateral discourse.

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### Introduction

The impact that proponents of modern architecture, who became refugees during the 1930s, might have had on modernist architecture in their countries of exile has been discussed widely. Such literature, such as Siegfried Giedion's 1941 publication *Space, Time and Architecture*, often assumes that modern architecture was adopted in a linear and "natural" way. Early outlines of the history of modernism underestimated the complex process of acculturation, adaptation and assimilation of refugees that was informed by each practitioner's skill and the ways in which the country of exile reacted towards their presence. In exile, individuals lost the security of discourses and traditions within which they had operated, and they brought with them skills and professional beliefs that could be subsumed into the cultures that offered them exile.<sup>1</sup>

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Within the historiography of modernism, avant-garde architects such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius, who left Germany during the 1930s as a direct reaction towards the National Socialist regime, are among the best documented. This resulted in a unilateral discourse<sup>2</sup> and the false assumption was

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created that agents of the avant-garde had to fear persecution, whereas traditionalists were not discriminated against.<sup>3</sup> Since the 1990s, the study of cultural transfer based on the work of well-known individuals is being questioned by many scholars and doubts uttered as to whether an understanding about exile and emigration can be generalised. While the work and lives of well-documented practitioners has been significant, they nevertheless represent only a limited part of the diverse and complex developments in twentieth-century architectural history. The study of Jewish mass emigration too, is considered limiting, as it neglects individual differences such as age, educational and cultural background.<sup>4</sup>

An investigation of the ways in which émigré architects were transmitters of ideas is consequently problematic from a number of perspectives. Not only is it difficult to determine which ideas were transmitted in which direction and by whom, it is also not possible to know in which ways the architectural history of a particular place would have developed with or without refugee architects.<sup>5</sup> This analysis of the backgrounds of refugee architects to New Zealand discusses the multifarious skill sets, the cultural background and expertise of refugee architects prior to immigration with the goal of broadening the existing framework of knowledge on their contributions and adding to recent scholarship that seeks to overcome ingrained positions and notions of twentieth-century architectural history.

Such positions were aptly described in the 2008 article “Migration and Modern Architecture” by Paul Walker who presented a critical reflection on the ways in which modern architecture, and the role that immigrants had within, had been presented.<sup>6</sup> Walker summarised three homogeneous positions until then often taken in New Zealand literature – modern architecture came from Europe, it arrived “late”, and local modern architecture developed during the 1950s within the practice “Group Architects”. Reflecting on the ways in which ideas, as well as architects migrate, Walker reminds readers that there were “rather more complex and messy conditions than simple binaries can describe” and explains that “the reception of European modernism in New Zealand ... was conditioned by earlier manifestations of modernity”<sup>7</sup> and thus vouched for a more varied scrutiny of the ways in which ideas are transferred in and from both directions.

In addressing not only subject-specific knowledge concerning practical skills and experience earned at building sites, but also the skills, ideological beliefs and value systems that related to individual ways of designing and practicing architecture; research on the European work of refugee architects offer insights that provide material for scrutinising the processes for adaptation and transformation of expertise. Further research may be interlaced with the architectural prerequisites refugee architects encountered in their country of immigration. This can help to address questions such as which skills, held by immigrants, were sought after because of a pre-existing interest in modern architecture. Further research could examine which ideas and beliefs were abandoned due to the exiled architects adapting to a new environment.

Within New Zealand scholarship, the work of individual emigrants such as Ernst Anton Plischke, Helmut Einhorn and Friedrich Neumann has been given attention.<sup>8</sup> Little knowledge exists, on the other hand, on how many emigrant architects were granted landing permits between 1938 and 1940, or about the backgrounds of those practitioners who have been identified. The lack of knowledge about their routes into exile furthermore fosters assumptions about pre-existing networks or inside knowledge.

Until recently, literature on the development of New Zealand modernism often focused on ways in which émigré architects were perceived by New Zealand architects. David Mitchell and Gillian Chaplin, for example, in their 1984 book *The Elegant Shed*<sup>9</sup> explained that their work was not easily accommodated, and assumed that this was due to New Zealand architects being “too self-consciously nationalistic for that, feeling they had to develop their own way of doing things”.<sup>10</sup> This statement described the perception that an inclusion of architects who trained and practiced in Europe would deter from developing the local and national architectural idiom.

On the other hand, Peter Shaw in his 1997 book, *A History of New Zealand Architecture*, observed:

It was largely left to architects who were refugees from Central Europe to introduce a Modernist outlook, their efforts during the following decade were to meet with considerable resistance.<sup>11</sup>

Here, one of the three positions, described by Walker, becomes apparent in that refugee architects alone are considered as having introduced modernism to New Zealand.

Other recent scholarship, such as Justine Clark's and Paul Walker's 2000 book *Looking for the Local*,<sup>12</sup> and the article “Helmut Einhorn: Dislocation and Modern Architecture in New Zealand”<sup>13</sup> by Andrew Leach in 2004 discuss the broad backgrounds of refugee practitioners. Julia Gatley's 2008 book *Long Live The Modern*<sup>14</sup> and, more recently, Gatley's and Paul Walker's *Vertical Living*<sup>15</sup> create awareness of the variety of expressions in modern New Zealand architecture. These books explain the influx of modernism to New Zealand not only through exiled architects, but also through architects who had worked and lived in the United Kingdom and who were prompted to return because of the war. They, as well as the refugee architects, brought with them first-hand knowledge of innovations in Europe. The impact of the refugees, according to Gatley, was immediate and shaped in private practices but particularly the Department of Housing Construction – later the Housing Division – of the Ministry of Works.<sup>16</sup>

Of the 18 refugee architects whose names could be identified during research for this paper, 9 worked for the Department of Housing Construction or other Public Departments<sup>18</sup> shortly after their arrival. This bespeaks an interest in the expertise of these architects on the part of government authorities. While the routes into exile can be retraced for most practitioners, only some of the European work of the following architects is analysed here: Fritz Feuer (from 1940 Frederick

Farrar, 1896, Vienna – 1974, Wellington ~~1974~~), Richard Fuchs (1887, Karlsruhe – 1947, Wellington), Ernst Gerson (1890, Hamburg – 1984, Palmerston North), Heinrich Kulka (1900, Littau – 1971, Auckland), Friedrich Hugo Neumann (from 1947 Frederick Newman, 1900, Vienna – 1964, Wellington) and Ernst Anton Plischke (1903, Klosterneuburg – 1992, Vienna).

## Routes into exile

The majority of refugee architects arrived in New Zealand in 1939. Those who were German citizens had experienced increasing discrimination since 1933 when the national socialist party (NSDAP) under Adolf Hitler had commenced the marginalisation and deprivation of rights that would lead to the systematic murder of six million Jews and five million members of other minorities before the end of Second World War.<sup>19</sup>

The so-called Reichskristallnacht on 9 November 1938 marked a decisive change from organised discrimination towards open and government-sanctioned violence. Using the assassination of a civil servant at the German Embassy in Paris as a cause for action, the NSDAP found an outlet and grounds for unprecedented organised assault on Jewish citizens. Men of the Sturmabteilung (SA) set light to synagogues all over Germany, battered individuals, pillaged and destroyed Jewish-owned property. From 1 January 1939, Jews were not permitted to run retail stores, to tender goods, and skilled workmen were not allowed to run workshops. Shops, real estate and other valuable assets were sold into “Aryan” ownership and the revenue paid into blocked accounts that were later confiscated by the Deutsche Reich. The systematic discrimination and persecution had the effect that an unprecedented wave of refugees attempted to flee the Nazi regime.<sup>20</sup>

Gustav Cohn, Ernst Gerson and Richard Fuchs were First World War veterans – Fuchs had been awarded the Iron Cross for his services. Veterans in particular had retained the hope that their status would exempt them from persecution. Gerson, however, left as early as 1933, and Fuchs who “made numerous enquiries about getting out of Germany”<sup>21</sup> had sent one of his daughters to a boarding school in the UK, perhaps in preparation for their eventual immigration to an English-speaking country. Fuchs as well as Feuer were arrested immediately after the Reichskristallnacht, on 10 November 1938 and detained in the concentration camp in Dachau. Both were released because their wives could produce documentation confirming that they could leave Germany. Upon his release, Fuchs threw his Iron Cross into the Rhine.<sup>22</sup> In order to be allowed to leave Germany legally, numerous papers had to be acquired and fees as well as a specially devised tax – the Reichsfluchtsteuer – had to be paid.<sup>23</sup>

Ostensibly, the goal of systematic intimidation by the NSDAP was to put pressure on Jewish citizens to leave the country, while at the same time relinquishing their possessions. The perfidious underlying motives were also to export anti-Semitism; in creating impoverished and therefore undesirable asylum seekers



it was hoped that Jewish refugees would cause social tensions in the countries of destination.<sup>24</sup>

While the situation in Germany developed over time, Jews in Austria were subjected to persecution so suddenly that it left little time to plan an escape.<sup>25</sup> Heinrich Kulka, for example, fled from Vienna to Hradec Králové, Czechoslovakia on 14 March 1938, two days after Hitler annexed Austria into Germany. He then contacted the composer Arnold Schönberg (1874–1951) in Los Angeles seeking advice regarding obtaining a work permit and employment in the US.<sup>26</sup> Schönberg had held a position at the University of California in Los Angeles since 1936 and Kulka was acquainted with him through his mentor, Adolf Loos. By October 1938, Kulka's plans to immigrate to the US had changed and he asked Schönberg for a testimonial to use in seeking permission to immigrate to Australia.<sup>27</sup> Hitler occupied Czechoslovakia on 16 March 1939, and Kulka left the country on 30 June that year, arriving in New Zealand in March 1940 after spending 6 months in London.<sup>28</sup>

Kulka's escape was similar to that of a number of refugees who, immediately following the Reichskristallnacht or the annexation of Austria, fled to neighbouring countries of the Deutsche Reich. Countries further afield were often the destination of a second or third immigration. Ernst Gerson, for example, had left Germany in 1933, lived for six months in Zagreb, Yugoslavia and for five and a half years in Sofia, Bulgaria from where he fled in 1939 to New Zealand.<sup>29</sup>

From 1936 until the outbreak of Second World War, New Zealand allowed entry to approximately 1100 refugees. The majority arrived between 1938 and 1939, in all probability as a direct result of the events of the Reichskristallnacht. New Zealand had in 1931 amended the 1920 *Immigration Restriction Amendment Act*, which prevented aliens from entering New Zealand unless: they had guaranteed employment, were in possession of a considerable amount of capital, or "possessed knowledge or skills which would enable them to rehabilitate readily, without detriment to any resident in New Zealand".<sup>30</sup> Such considerations were not unusual and in most countries refugees with professional qualifications or capital were preferred.<sup>31</sup>

When selecting applicants, their suitability for absorption into the culture and population appears to have been a deciding factor and non-Jewish applicants were preferred. Additionally, Jewish applicants, who were business people, were deemed objectionable as professional business associations feared their rivalry and competition. Skilled tradespeople, furthermore, were feared as a group who could potentially "put New Zealanders out of work".<sup>32</sup>

Ambivalence and opposition towards accepting Jewish refugees existed in groups such as the Federation of Labour, the Dominion Settlement Association, and the Five Million Club, but some support existed in form of the Refugee Emergency Committee in Christchurch, an organisation that liaised with the Society of Friends and their Germany Emergency Committee in London, the Peace Pledge Union and the League of Nations Union.<sup>33</sup>

Jewish communities tried to support refugees within the boundaries set by the legislation but New Zealand churches reacted ambiguously. While church leaders supported the demand for allowing more refugees entry to the country, guarantors for refugees were rare. Among the architects analysed here only Farago is reported to have "... applied for a permit to enter New Zealand, per medium of the Rev. W.H. McKenzie, of Wadestown".<sup>34</sup> Reverent William Henry Purvis McKenzie was a Presbyterian ~~reverent~~ at the Wadestown Parish between 1936 and 1945 and involved in helping a number of German and Austrian refugees, perhaps as part of his engagement with the League of Nations Branch in New Zealand.<sup>35</sup>

The British Government established organisations such as the Czech Refugee Trust Fund, which helped with Kulka's and Ost's applications,<sup>36</sup> to assist Czechoslovakian citizens. It provided financial ~~assistance~~ and assisted refugees to immigrate to an overseas country of settlement and provided training and maintenance in Britain, pending re-emigration.<sup>37</sup>

In order to best comply ~~to~~ the requirements put in place by the legislation – which could be interpreted in different ways – Max Neumann, a senior citizen, appears to have ~~applied~~ an elaborate plan. New Zealand had probably become a destination for Neumann because his brother-in-law Benno Max Monheimer had already lived there since 1933 and sponsored his application for a landing permit in 1937.<sup>38</sup> Perhaps to increase his chances of being accepted, Neumann's son Franz Georg (1903–1970) enrolled at the Edinburgh Dental Hospital and School in 1936 and was in 1938 listed in the British Dentists Register as a qualified dentist.<sup>39</sup> Franz Georg had gained a PhD from the University in Würzburg with a thesis on two successors of the Baroque architect Balthasar Neumann in 1927.<sup>40</sup> Perhaps the family deliberated that a dentist was more likely to be granted a landing permit than an architectural historian. Neumann was also able to bring £800 with him, money that had been provided by friends in Switzerland and money he sent to his son in Edinburgh, until this was not permitted anymore. Neumann's property such as land, stocks and shares were confiscated.<sup>41</sup>

Refugees were ultimately selected arbitrarily and loosely upon their suitability of absorption, the possession of desirable skills and knowledge, the capital they would bring into the country, or on basis of character witness statements or relatives in New Zealand, as well as upon their age and the number of dependants.<sup>42</sup> In the case of architect refugees and their families, it seems that most had had sponsors in New Zealand. His brother-in-law, the dental surgeon Dr. Gorodiski, for example, sponsored Cohn; Irene Koppel, a photographer, and her mother Katarina, supported Ernst Gerson<sup>43</sup>; Maximilian Rosenfeld obtained a landing permit by writing to Clement Attlee, then leader of the Labour Party in the UK, who appears to have arranged for a landing permit through Bill Jorden.<sup>44</sup> The only architect who is reported to have come to New Zealand, prompted by a direct search for employment opportunities was Friedrich Neumann.<sup>45</sup>

The outline of their routes into exile demonstrates that for émigré architects, their coming to New Zealand in 1939 was not a choice but predominantly due

to chance. Due to the loss of Customs Department files concise questions as to how successful candidates were selected or declined and whether a memorandum existed that gave priority to applications made by representatives of particular professions cannot be answered.<sup>46</sup>

## Refugee architects

When outlining the work and backgrounds of seven practitioners no homogenous connection prevails. The scope and purpose of this introduction to their work does not allow the addition of new material or insights to well-known practitioners such as Plischke or Neumann; nor can a complete understanding of prolific and multi-faceted practices such as Richard Fuchs' be provided. Instead, this examination outlines their oeuvres and the variety and range of the contexts in which they worked. The aim is to foster an understanding of the ways in which each practitioner understood himself as modern, i.e. timely and forward-looking. Practitioners are introduced according to their age and place of practice ~~and the nature of their work in New Zealand, as well as~~ their careers in Europe will be discussed.

The oeuvre of the Karlsruhe architect and composer Richard Fuchs (1887–1947) consists of a broad spectrum such as houses, hospitals, factories, a synagogue and a hotel.<sup>47</sup> In New Zealand, Fuchs worked for the Department of Housing Construction in Wellington from 1939 until his death in 1947.<sup>48</sup> He had studied architecture in Munich and Karlsruhe and worked between graduating in 1911 and the outbreak of First World War in several practices in Berlin such as at Hart & Lesser and for the Jewish Community. After the war he opened his private practice but took a position – when inflation made work as independent architect impossible – at the Railway Head offices in Karlsruhe. Fuchs re-opened his practice in 1924 and worked as an independent architect until occupational bans disallowed it.<sup>49</sup>

Fuchs practiced during a time when Walter Gropius (1883–1969) and Otto Haesler (1880–1962) built the Siedlung Dammerstock in 1928, a settlement in Karlsruhe that was a hallmark of functionalist housing. Here, rationalism and the standardisation of buildings and parts, as well as the use of innovative construction techniques and materials were encouraged and tested. While some of Fuchs' contemporaries followed the example of Dammerstock,<sup>50</sup> Fuchs's style remained in keeping with traditional architecture<sup>51</sup> which placed him among the majority of architects active during the 1920s and early 1930s in Karlsruhe that preferred traditional idioms.<sup>52</sup> Fuchs' 1923 interior of the Jewish cultural space, created for the Große Deutsche Kunstausstellung, his synagogue in Gernsbach, and the houses in Mozartstrasse and Moltkestrasse, as well as the hotel and restaurant Gottesauer Hof (Figure 1) display a practice entrenched in local traditions and influenced by the teachings of Friedrich Ostendorf (1871–1915). Ostendorf, who taught between 1907 and 1915 at the Technische Universität in Karlsruhe, was



**Figure 1.** Unknown photographer, Richard Fuchs, *Hotel-Restaurant Gottesauer Hof*, Karlsruhe, 1928, postcard in the collection of the author.

engaged in configuring a universally valid and comprehensible tradition in building, which was to consist of a system of conventions that would impart stylistic security to architects and which harked back to the style prevalent around 1800. In his best-known theoretical work, *Sechs Bücher vom Bauen* (*Six book on building*), Ostendorf writes:

5        Designing means to find the simplest manifestation for a building programme, whereby “simple” must obviously relate to the external shapes and forms.<sup>53</sup>

Fuchs’ hotel-restaurant Gottesauer Hof was built in 1926 for his uncle Arthur Fuchs. It consists of an unadorned five-storey main building with hipped-roof and accentuated eaves. The entrance is emphasised with an arched arcade that protrudes at the corners as well as balconies on the third and fourth floor. The crenellated balcony and the overall large volume give the hotel a fortified appearance. It displays Ostendorf’s credo that sought to find basic shapes based on traditional architectural styles to form a universally comprehensible building.

15        In Hamburg, Ernst Gerson (1890–1984) was the youngest of three brothers all of whom worked as architects in a joint practice that had opened in 1907 and in which he worked between 1920 and July 1933.<sup>54</sup> He arrived in New Zealand in August 1939 and also gained a position at the Department of Housing Construction where he worked from 1939 until his retirement in 1956.<sup>55</sup>

20        As with his two older brothers Hans (1881–1931) and Oskar (1886–1966) Ernst studied architecture in Munich (1909 to 1914), after which he spent a year travelling in Italy and then volunteered for service in First World War.<sup>56</sup> In 1916, he was imprisoned in Russia but was able to escape and return after a two-year journey in 1920, which he described in 1964.<sup>57</sup> Before First World War the brothers had built houses and villas for wealthy clients and were active as property developers

and dealers in real estate. They were active during the first quarter of the twentieth century in Hamburg where a group of architects, building officers and art critics had led the city to become one of the most prominent locations where modern regional architecture was practiced. Their Kontorhäuser (office buildings) led to international acclaim during the 1920s and to publications in national journals and magazines such as *Der Städtebau* and *Wasmuths Monatshefte für Baukunst*.<sup>58</sup>

The regionalism that was being developed was specifically shaped against ideologies articulated by the international avant-garde. Among the best-known examples are Gerson's Ballinhaus and Fritz Höger's Chilehaus, both built around 1922–24 (Figure 2) within the Kontorhausviertel in Hamburg. While the architects had different beliefs concerning which means would lead to a new German monumental architecture, their goals concurred. The Gerson brothers did not utilise expressive exterior arrangements as Höger did, and preferred instead smooth surfaces with little relief and basic geometric shapes to create a clear structure and proportion. Both buildings were to illustrate notions of severity and durability that in their understanding signified Hamburg. To develop forms and shapes that delineate such aspirations both practices took inspiration from several Heimatschutzverbände – associations that were part of architectural modernism and that aimed to protect traditional local building traditions and use of materials – which led to the use of red brick cladding. Their work was based on a cultural consensus on what might be suitable for Hamburg in comparison to other cities.<sup>59</sup>

From 1930 onwards, the effects of the Great Depression diminished their clientele and prevented projects from being completed. The practice existed until 1933 when Oscar and Ernst were excluded from the Bund Deutscher Architekten; this exclusion was tantamount to an occupational ban.<sup>60</sup> Ernst and his family



Figure 2. Unknown photographer, Hans and Oskar Gerson, *Ballinhaus*, Hamburg, 1922–24, postcard in the collection of the author.



immigrated first to Zagreb then to Sofia where he bought a share in a furniture factory and worked also as an architect.<sup>61</sup>

5 Gustav Cohn (1890–1969) was born in Chemnitz and had also studied at the Technische Universität in Munich for his undergraduate and at Dresden for his postgraduate Diploma that he received in 1915. After serving in First World War, Cohn worked in 1919 in an architectural office that planned worker settlements for the Lautawerke in Chemnitz, an aluminium plant. Under the auspice of architect Clemens Simon, the building of a settlement and infrastructure was built at that time.<sup>62</sup>

10 After working for the Lautawerke, Cohn gained employment for an unnamed practice in Coburg before returning to Chemnitz in 1923 to manage the building department for the textile manufacture Marschel Frank Sachs Ltd (Mafrasa) until 1927. Between 1927 and 1933, Cohn worked in the practice of Bruno Kalitzki, also in Chemnitz, who was inspired by the Neue Bauen. Similar to Karlsruhe, Chemnitz also fostered during the 1920s modernist architecture with buildings by Hans Poelzig, the Gerson brothers, Walter Gropius and Erich Mendelsohn. This prompted local practices to follow suit. Kalitzki's cinema Roter Turm displayed the white, unadorned façade, typical for the austere aesthetic of rationalist architecture at that time (Figure 3).<sup>63</sup> After occupational bans came into place Cohn worked as a labourer.<sup>64</sup>

25 After First World War, the formative years of Friedrich Feuer, Heinrich Kulka, Ernst Anton Plischke and Friedrich Neumann were marked by a distinct social and political break in Vienna. The city greatly changed as a result of the dissolution of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy and the establishment of the first republic.



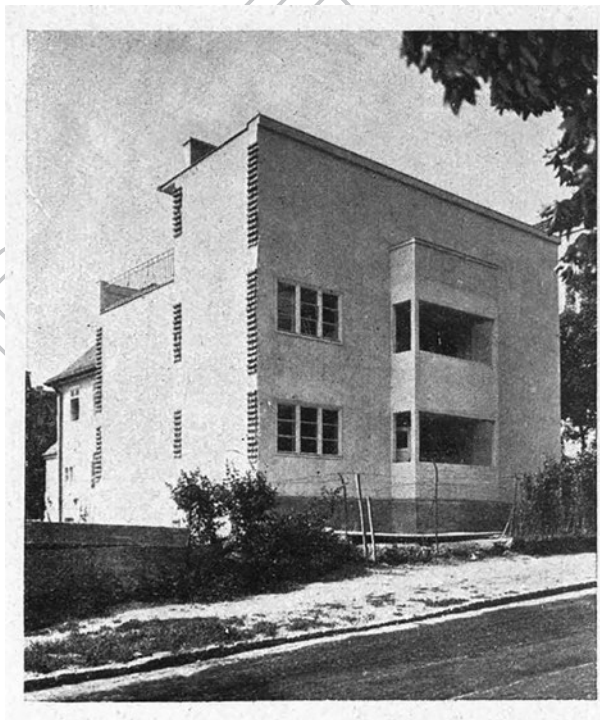
**Figure 3.** Bruno Kalitzki, Cinema "Roter Turm", Chemnitz, c.1929. Photographer unknown, courtesy of Stadt Chemnitz, Bildarchiv, Sign. I 61.

Vienna was now under social democratic administration, became a federal state, and gained financial autonomy.

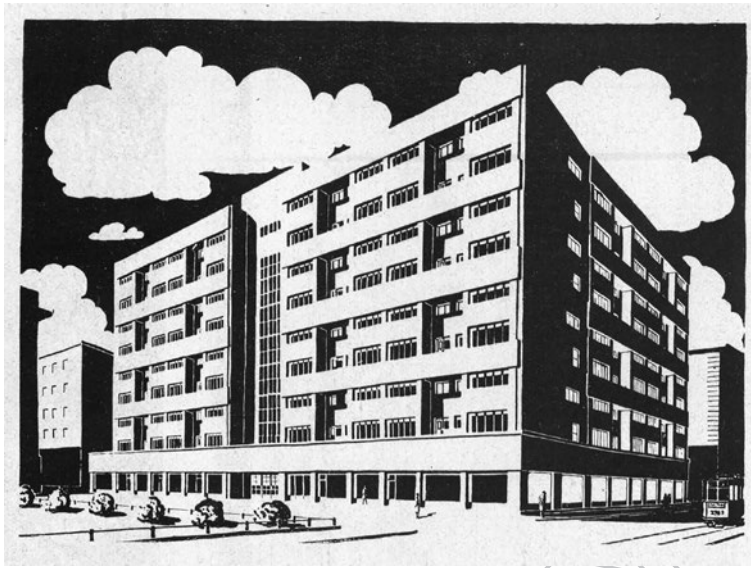
As in other European metropolises, rampant housing shortages made the development of social housing one of the main endeavours of the new Red Vienna government. The city developed housing and infrastructure programmes towards a “socialist city” with the goal to provide as much affordable housing as possible for the working class, educational reforms and public welfare. Municipal dwellings included not only apartments but – in keeping with socialist communal living ideals – childcare facilities, libraries, laundries, lecture halls and parks.<sup>65</sup>

Part of this social experiment was Fritz Feuer’s Einküchenhaus (a tenement with one communal kitchen) (Figures 4, 5) in 1928.<sup>66</sup>

It was built together with Otto Rudolf Polak-Hellwig (1885–1958) for the cooperative building society Heimhof. Polak-Hellwig had built another Einküchenhaus for Heimhof in 1921 together with Carl Witzmann.<sup>67</sup> Both were conceived in relation to ideas of the feminist Social Democrat Therese Schlesinger-Fickert (1863–1940). Einküchenhäuser related to nineteenth-century visions that pursued the dissolution of the nuclear family and a move towards communal living.<sup>68</sup> Heimhof offered an alternative way of living whereby, according to Feuer, individual kitchens are relinquished in favour of central kitchens in order to



**Figure 4.** Fritz Feuer and Otto Rudolf Polak-Hellwig, *Einküchenhaus*, Wien, 1928. Fritz Feuer, “Das Einküchenhaus” *Das Österreichische Bauwesen* 1928, 64.



**Figure 5.** Fritz Feuer, *Design for an Einküchenhaus*. Fritz Feuer, “Das Einküchenhaus” *Das Österreichische Bauwesen* 1928, 64.

relieve women from household chores.<sup>69</sup> The Einküchenhaus by Polak-Hellwig and Witzmann was planned with a central kitchen staffed by personnel that were paid for by the tenants. Modern facilities such as a kindergarten, roof terrace, central heating, central laundry, waste chute and dumbwaiter were all present.<sup>70</sup> Such communal projects were not the norm in Vienna and the majority of housing focused more readily on an expressive, “folkloric-romantic tendency” that harked back to nineteenth-century architectural tastes.<sup>71</sup>

Friedrich Neumann (1900–1964) was educated at the Österreichischen Technischen Hochschule Wien (1919–1923).<sup>72</sup> In New Zealand, Neumann would work at the Housing Department from 1939 and would develop here a number of major housing developments in Wellington, Auckland and Christchurch. He would become head of the Hydro design office at the Ministry of Works and ~~would be~~ engaged in planning and executing power plants among other things.<sup>73</sup>

Friedrich Neumann’s projects between 1923 and 1938 ~~consist~~ of a multi-faceted oeuvre and a broad range of skill. After graduating, Neumann briefly joined the practice of his father Alexander Neumann (1861–1947) before taking classes, probably as an extra-mural student, at L’École Supérieure des beaux-arts in Paris.<sup>74</sup> He also worked in Camille Lefèvre’s (1876–1946) studio (1924–1927) and contributed to Lefèvre’s work on the Louvre, the League of Nations building (Geneva), and the Villa Velasquez in Madrid (1925–1935).<sup>75</sup> Neumann worked in his father’s practice again until 1932 which at that time was mainly involved in large-scale housing projects in Vienna such as the building on Heiligenstädterstraße and single-family dwellings inspired by classical architecture such as the Villa at Dionysius Andrassy-Straße (Figure 6).



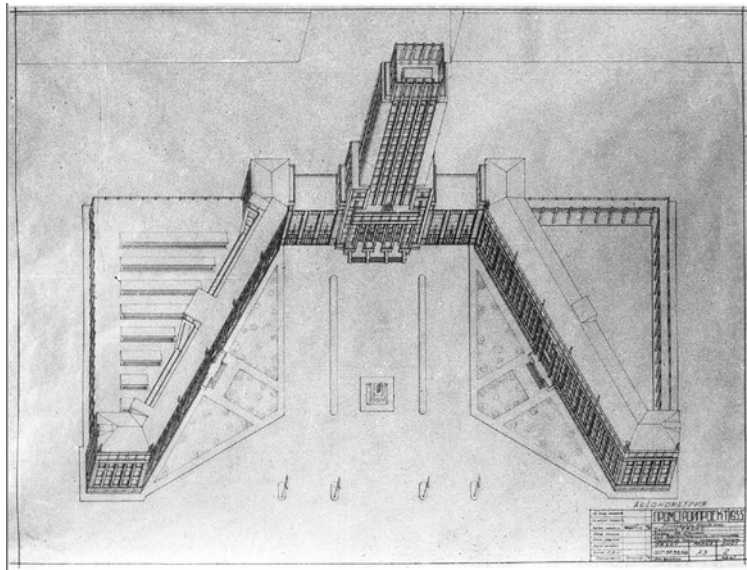


**Figure 6.** Alexander Neumann, Ernst von Gotthilf and Friedrich Neumann, *Villa at Dionysius Andrassy-Straße*, Vienna, between 1927 and 1932. Photograph by Gary Quigg Photography.

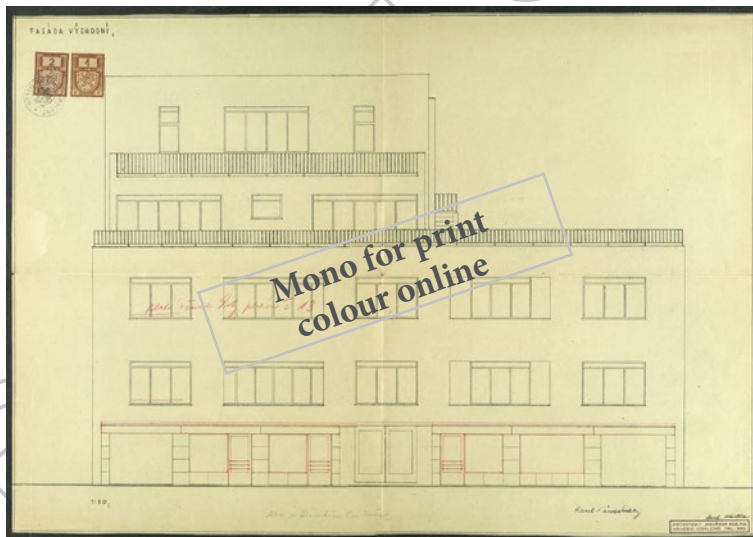
The social and political break that represented Red Vienna appears to have had a great impact on Neumann's interest in socialist and communist ideas and led to his working in the Soviet Union between 1932 and 1937. Here, Neumann worked as a senior design architect in Moscow and was mainly concerned with constructing Trade Union buildings and infrastructural facilities. The architectural style of these buildings, such as the 1934 design for Main Entrance Buildings for the Stalin Motorcar Works, Moscow (Figure 7) displays neo-classical traits and monumental aspirations typical for Soviet Architecture of that time.<sup>76</sup>

In contrast to Neumann's education and practice, Heinrich Kulka's (1900–1971) was fundamentally influenced by the principles that represent the work of his mentor Adolf Loos. Kulka worked at Fletcher Construction in Auckland, and also ran a private practice. In Vienna, he was briefly enrolled at the Österreichischen Technischen Hochschule Wien but received most of his architectural education in Adolf Loos' private Bauschule<sup>77</sup> as well as from being a staff member in Loos' office. After also working in 1927–1928 in the Stuttgart practice of Ernst Otto Oßwald (1880–1960) Kulka joined Loos briefly in Paris<sup>78</sup> and after returning to Vienna worked on numerous projects with Loos' until his death in 1933. From 1930, Kulka also ran an independent practice first in Vienna and then from 1933 in Hradec Králové (then Königgrätz), Czechoslovakia. As Loos' office manager Kulka was closely involved with the execution of the 1930 country house Kuhner in Payerbach and the 1932 contribution for the settlement of the Werkbund in Vienna.<sup>79</sup> Kulka's houses and villas were indebted to Loos' Raumplan principles which Kulka developed further.<sup>80</sup>

The construction of the apartment building for the entrepreneur Karel Löwenbach in Hradec Králové (Ambrožova 906/2), for example, (Figure 8) began



**Figure 7.** Friedrich Neumann, *Design for the Main Entrance Buildings for the Stalin Motorcar Works, Moscow, 1934.* Andrew Leach, Frederick H. Newman. *Lectures on Architecture* (Gent: A & S Books, 2003), 173.



**Figure 8.** Heinrich Kulka, *Apartment House Löwenbach, Hradec Králové, 1938.* SOKA Hradec Králové.

in September 1938 and was completed in August 1939, shortly after Kulka had fled to London.<sup>81</sup> The exterior facades of the apartment building adhere to the aesthetic of Kulka's houses, as seen in the rendering of the windows and the use of green stone cladding around the entry. The handling of the volumes which step back on the upper floors, as well as the loggias on the first and second floor that

recess into the façade, are reminiscent of Loos' projects for apartment houses such his 1923 Kleinwohnungshaus für die Gemeinde Wien (Small apartment house for the city of Vienna).

The architect Ernst Anton Plischke (1903–1992) left Vienna because of his political orientation, to protect his Jewish wife from persecution and because he was in his own words in 1940 “a member of a school of architecture which, being the product of the democratic regime, the Nazi regime disliked and discouraged”.<sup>82</sup>

Plischke left Austria in February 1938, arrived in New Zealand in May 1939, and obtained a position at the Government Housing Department in July.<sup>83</sup> In 1942, he was described in an official memorandum concerning several refugee-architects working for the Housing Department as a “... man of great ability and possibly of genius”.<sup>84</sup> He is today the best-known immigrant architect to New Zealand and has been discussed in numerous articles and books.

Plischke had studied in Peter Behrens's (1868–1940) class at the Akademie der bildenden Künste in Vienna and also briefly worked in his practice after graduating in 1926, prior to working for Josef Frank between 1927 and 1928. At Frank's practice, Plischke was engaged in the development the municipal apartment building in Sebastian-Kelch-Gasse (Figure 9) as well as on interior designs for the Schauflergasse and Schleiergasse and representational spaces for the town hall in Vienna.<sup>85</sup>

Josef Frank, as well as Adolf Loos, greatly influenced the architectural climate in the changed political and social situation in Vienna at that time. Frank, in particular, had in his theoretical writings developed a critical view towards Bauhaus ideology – which he regarded as a fashionable system of shapes and forms – towards the functionalism of the Neues Bauen, and towards the traditionalism in



**Figure 9.** Josef Frank with Ernst Anton Plischke, *Apartment House Sebastian Kelch-Gasse*, Vienna, 1928. Photograph by Gary Quigg Photography.

Vienna, the latter of which avoided “all examination of architectural questions of the day”.<sup>86</sup> Alongside this criticism, a critical stance and intellectual dialogue about the nature of progress and the progress of change had developed that ultimately sought to find alternative solutions and viewpoints.

Among Plischkes best-known and critically acclaimed works during the 1930s are his employment offices Arbeitsamt Liesing (1930/31), his contribution to the Werkbundsiedlung (1932) in Vienna as well as his Haus Gamerith (1933/34).

Arbeitsamt Liesing is akin to functionalist ideas of the Neue Bauen. Plischke made use of Le Corbusier’s “trace regulateur” as a means with which to give the facade and spaces proportion,<sup>87</sup> developed a floor plan in relation to the usage and function within the building, and drew a connection between his design of the floor plan with utopian visions of a transparent and comprehensible society.<sup>88</sup> The urge to find a solution for social problems with the help of the creation of floor plans that were thought to alter behaviour and movement was one of the essential discourses of the Neues Bauen.<sup>89</sup>

## Conclusions

In his article, “Die geköpfte Architektur” (The Beheaded Architecture) on the effects of the expulsion of architects from Austria as a result of Fascism, architectural historian Friedrich Achleitner declared that “there is no homogeneous architectural modernism”<sup>90</sup> and in doing so reminded of the misleading historiographical claim that had described the architectural avant-garde of the 1920s as mainstream and its practitioners as brethren of one, easily definable and describable idea. Exiled architects, such as Fuchs and Gerson were proponents and practitioners of a more common and dominant conservative architecture. The work by Gerson and his brothers furthermore displayed the wish to develop a distinct local architectural idiom that would advance the profile of Hamburg and that would preserve its historic architectural integrity.

Achleitner also explained that 50% of the architects who were involved in the execution of the Wiener Werkbundsiedlung either emigrated or were murdered, so that Vienna “lost its whole intellectual and progressive architectural potential”,<sup>91</sup> which subsequently led to a discontinuation of the critical dialogue within modern ideologies initiated by Josef Frank. In displacing a large number of progressive architects, it can be asked if and to what extent these critical viewpoints were relocated and transferred together with Feuer, Kulka, Neumann and Plischke and how these viewpoints might have been adapted to their practices in New Zealand.

When seeking to understand the transfer of knowledge into New Zealand architectural culture, knowledge of the background of practitioners is important as it cannot be assumed that a change in location resulted in a complete break in personal beliefs and practices. Exile, therefore, meant a changed context but not necessarily a break in the ways in which architecture was understood and practiced.



5 Many refugee architects in New Zealand gained positions within government agencies and large construction companies and would be among the founders of the Architectural Research Group in Wellington. ~~Leach's argument that~~

... the speed with which these architects came to have a direct impact on New Zealand's architectural culture, cities, infrastructure and regions during a time of war suggests a degree of enlightened intellectual leadership ...<sup>92</sup>

points towards the circumstances that enabled their inclusion. ~~To be~~ able to exude influence and to unfurl knowledge a basic willingness to allow for it and a general interest in the alien knowledge must be presumed by the government agencies and private practices that employed refugees. Any influence exile architects might have had in New Zealand after 1939 can be investigated more readily on the basis of an examination and interest between two cultures whereby openness and interest in the skills is displayed and the ability to adapt to the local peculiarities is shown by the exiled architects so that a mutual transfer takes place, leading to a hybrid outcome.<sup>93</sup>

This paper has outlined the careers of several refugee architects prior to their arrival in New Zealand to add nuanced knowledge to current scholarship. Further research could analyse the work of refugee architects at the Housing Construction Department in order to understand their impact. It could also focus on the degree to which some refugees are perceived as transmitters of modernist ideas, and the ways in which those who followed Heimatstil principles adapted or dismissed these in their subsequent work in New Zealand. To understand the roles which refugee architects played within the development of modern architecture in New Zealand, further research is needed that explains the ways in which their prior knowledge met with new demands and existing positions so that their influx as well as the nature of the hybrid outcome can be understood more fully.

## Notes

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- 25 16. Gatley, *Long live*, 4; Leach, "Jewish Culture".
17. These are: Gustav Cohn, Lewis Desiderios Deli, Helmut Einhorn, Francis Farago, Fritz Feuer, Richard Fuchs, Ernst Gerson, Rudolph Francis Adolph Kann, Heinrich Kulka, Alexander Neumann, Friedrich Neumann, Max Neumann, Friedrich Ost, Ernst Anton Plischke, Imrich Porsolt, Max Rosenfeld, Friedrich Herz Schwarzkopf, Erwin Ziffer. Since this list only pertains to certificates of naturalisation it cannot be assumed that it is complete.
- Most names were published in: "Extract from *New Zealand Gazette* No. 19, 10th April 1947: 431", [R23434024AAAAC489110/AL11162] Archives New Zealand The Department of Internal Affairs *Te Tari Taiwhenua*, Wellington (hereafter DIA-TTT). Not every refugee might have also chosen to apply for naturalisation or was not granted naturalisation that year (e.g. Helmut Einhorn was naturalised in 1946). The names of Alexander and Max Neumann also do not appear, as both were deceased in 1947. Tibor Donner arrived as early as 1927, and Gerhard Rosenberg came in 1955. Odo Strewe is excluded from this study as he commenced working as a Landscape Architect after arriving in New Zealand and no records of his advertisement agency in Berlin could be found. Helmut Einhorn and Imrich Porsolt are not discussed as they were both too young to have gained significant working experience prior to their arrival in New Zealand.
18. These were: Cohn, Feuer, Fuchs, Gerson, Friedrich Neumann, Plischke, Rosenfeld, Schwarzkopf and Ziffer.
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




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5

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